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Continuation of political conflicts or a new beginning?

Turkish refugees in North Rhine-Westphalia

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SUMMARY

Since the failed coup attempt by parts of the Turkish military against President Erdogan in the summer of 2016, the Turkish government has suspended more than 100,000 civil servants on the pretext that they had planned a coup. Out of fear of persecution and arbitrary arrests, around 21,000 Turkish citizens have since applied for asylum in Germany. Many of them found refuge in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). At the same time, communities of people with a migration background related to Turkey have been living in this federal state, particularly in the large cities, since the 1960s. This *Working Paper* examines how members of both groups in NRW perceive each other and how they interact with each other in everyday life, which conflicts arise, and how the political developments in Turkey affect these processes. The study shows that Turkish refugees experience solidarity and sympathy from people with a Turkey-related migration background and their organisations, but also encounter some hostility from them in everyday life. This reflects the strong polarisation within the communities of people with a Turkey-related migration background in NRW since 2016, which the *Working Paper* also addresses. The author advocates a differentiated, empirically-based approach to the subject area and strongly warns against generalisations. Approaches to conflict resolution must incorporate the complexity of actors and interactions, as well as the diversity of opinions and positions within communities with a connection to Turkey.

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Findings

Past experiences of forced displacement and repression continue to shape the everyday lives of Turkish refugees in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Refugees from Turkey have usually experienced political repression and persecution before they had to flee. These experiences also determine their process of settlement in Germany and their behaviour in the new living environment. Out of fear of persecution and negative consequences for relatives in Turkey, or so as not to repeat traumatic experiences, they initially avoid contact with people with a Turkey-related migration background and migrant organisations (so-called migrant self-organisations) and are very cautious in everyday life. However, this reinforces their social isolation. At first, they do not recognise the plurality of opinions and the polarised debates within the Turkey-related migrant communities in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). At the same time, they remain in contact with relatives and friends and are emotionally involved in the developments in their country of origin.

In everyday life, Turkish refugees experience hostility from individuals with a Turkey-related migration background that refers to political conflicts in Turkey

Refugees from Turkey and people with a Turkey-related migration background mainly encounter each other in their living environment, at school, or in kindergarten. In some cases, the refugees experience hostility from supporters of the Turkish government, who refer to political developments in Turkey. They report, for example, that they are insulted as “traitors”, “supporters of terrorism” or “Gülenists”.¹ Some refugees have also had similar experiences with inter-

preters or employees of security services in refugee shelters or the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). Such experiences increase their feeling of insecurity and, as a result, some refugees resort to strategies for avoiding contact and hiding their own identity in everyday life which they developed in Turkey. This complicates their mental process of settlement in the new context.

These processes reflect both the strong polarisation within Turkey-related migrant communities in Germany and social contrasts in Turkey

The political developments in Turkey caused a strong polarisation within the NRW-based Turkey-related migrant communities, particularly between supporters of the Gulen movement and the Turkish government, but secular-oriented people and organisations are affected as well. Turkish refugees experience the effects of this polarisation in everyday life. Therefore, they only seek contact to or receive support from organisations and individuals who are close to them in terms of their worldview. However, encounters with Turkish refugees and people with a Turkey-related migration background in NRW also display features of a social class contrast: the Turkish refugees often had a privileged social and economic position in Turkey and were accustomed to the corresponding treatment, while the families of many people with a Turkey-related migration background immigrated from a less privileged geographical and social context. This contrast influences the mutual perception of both groups and their interaction with each other in the German context, in which the balance of power has been reversed by the effects of forced displacement and migration.

¹ \ Supporters of the movement of the preacher Fethullah Gulen, who are held responsible by the Turkish government for the unsuccessful coup attempt and are classified as a terror organisation by Turkey (European Commission, p. 8)

Turkey-related migrant self-organisations carry out work of social importance but have to accomplish a delicate balancing act

If the refugees overcome their initial mistrust through positive personal experiences, independent migrant self-organisations can be an important source of support and guidance for them. These organisations take a very critical view of political developments in Turkey, but also of the increasing polarisation within German society. Their representatives are particularly aware of the effects of these developments in the Turkey-related communities. Some of them face the same accusations as the Turkish refugees. At the same time, they note that the German public is currently watching them with a particularly critical eye, which results in a feeling of constant pressure to position themselves publicly. These organisations and their staff, therefore, find themselves in a tricky position, as they have to mediate between Turkey-related migrant communities, refugees, and society as a whole, while at the same time having to moderate complex discussion processes among their members. However, the activities of these organisations fulfil an important function in fostering understanding within society as a whole. Local and state politics and civil society should acknowledge this and support them accordingly.

Scientific studies and approaches to conflict management must take greater account of the everyday experiences of those affected

Theoretical approaches to the study of conflicts within and between communities of migrants and refugees have so far rarely dealt with the actual everyday experiences of people affected by these conflicts. The experiences of refugees who have only recently had to leave their context of origin have so far been completely left out of scientific considerations. This is a research gap that should be addressed in future studies. The complex everyday experiences of refugees and their day-to-day interaction processes enable a new conceptual approach to conflicts within the migration society. The empirical findings derived must be taken into account by initiatives and projects for conflict management, so as to not neglect any relevant aspects. Although the conflicts observed in this study usually remain latent and do not turn violent, there is certainly a risk of escalation, which must be prevented. People who have fled violence and persecution must feel safe in Germany.

Introduction

Since the failed military coup in Turkey on 15/16 June 2016, around 21,000 Turkish citizens have applied for asylum in Germany. In 2019, they were the fourth-largest group among all applicants (BAMF, 2018, 2019, p. 3). In 2017 alone, around 2,500 Turkish citizens applied for asylum in North Rhine-Westphalia (MKFFI NRW 2017, p 16). They flee persecution because of their political views, unlawful arrests and allegations of being terrorists or conspirators. There are also reports of torture and undocumented detention centres in Turkey (European Commission, 2018, pp. 23, 32). At the same time, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) has been home to people with a Turkey-related migration background since the 1960s.² Their number is estimated at around 850,000, many of whom live in the conurbations along the Rhine and Ruhr rivers (MKFFI NRW, 2017, p 12). This is also where the organisational centres of Turkey-related community life in Germany are located (Schührer, 2018, p 13). Some commentators feared that under these circumstances, the conflicts in Turkey could also spread to Germany and warned that the arrival of a large number of refugees in combination with an allegedly partially failed integration policy carried the danger of “importing” violent conflicts (Poschardt, 2014; Decker, 2016).

The term “conflict importation” suggests that the feared conflicts are a one-way street: Refugees³ and other migrants bring their conflicts into the settlement society,⁴ which has no part in their emergence. However, international research shows that the conditions under which migrants live in the country of settlement determine the emergence of such conflicts just as strongly as influences from the country of origin (Monahan, Berns-McGown & Morden, 2014).

Furthermore, migrant communities and migrant self-organisations (MSOs)⁵ can intensify nationalist, ethnic or religious self-perceptions of their members with their activities and use violence suffered or remembered collectively as a resource for mobilisation. As people who have experienced processes of forced displacement and migration are already reorienting themselves and, as a result, often experience a change of their personal identity, they are susceptible to this type of discourse. In such cases, a strong identification with nationalistic, ethnic or religious group identities is an individual consequence of the migration process. Socio-economic exclusion and cultural marginalisation in the country of settlement reinforce these developments.

However, MSOs also offer refugees and migrants an important reference point in the new society. They serve as mediators between established and newly arrived population groups and may, under certain circumstances, make it possible to live out identities and opinions that are suppressed in the context of origin. Instead of a one-sided view, which interprets conflicts between and within migrant communities solely as a continuation of the constellations in the countries of origin of those affected, a conflict analysis is needed that comprehensively considers the mutual relationship between different migrant groups, the settlement society and the context of origin. Approaches to conflict management or transformation must be based on such an analysis.

These considerations present an opportunity for the study at hand to examine the interaction processes and conflicts between Turkish refugees and people with a Turkey-related migration background in NRW. The central question is: What conflicts do Turkish refugees experience in everyday life, to which political developments in Turkey do those involved refer, and what conclusions for scientific discussions can be drawn from this analysis?

2 \ In this *Paper*, people with a Turkey-related migration background are defined as all persons with at least one family member who migrated from Turkey to the Federal Republic of Germany. The term “Turkey-related” is chosen as a working term, because the population of Turkey consists of numerous groups that differ in terms of their religious self-image, their cultural affiliation, their language or their migration background. This acknowledges the sometimes controversial debates in the German context on terminology when referring to migrants and their second- and third generation descendants, which is closely related to the issue of citizenship (see Yildirim, 2018, p. 14).

3 \ The term “refugee” is used in this *Working Paper* when it refers to people who have applied for asylum in Germany and to people who refer to themselves as refugees.

4 \ This study uses the term “settlement society” to emphasise that migrants and refugees settle permanently at the destination to build up a life there and become part of the local living environment (see Luft, 2011, p. 12).

5 \ “Migrant self-organisations” are defined here as “associations [...] (1) whose objectives and purposes arise as a result of the situation and interests of people with migrant backgrounds, (2) whose members are mostly people with a migration background and (3) in which people with a migration background play a significant role in their internal structures and processes” (Pries, 2013, own translation). Some of the actors interviewed for this study reject this term for themselves. However, as it is generally easy to understand, the term is still used here as a working term.

Conflict importation, conflict transportation and transnationalism: Conceptual background

In the last twenty years, the scientific perspectives on the issue of conflict importation have changed considerably, analogous to the transnational turnaround in migration research (Mahler, 1998; Faist, 1998). While science initially regarded conflicts among refugees and migrants as a continuation of conflicts that prevail in the countries of origin of those involved (so-called core conflicts), current studies include factors such as experiences of discrimination and socio-economic inequality in the receiving country as well as identity changes in the course of migration. So far, however, there has been little insight from research into conflicts in which refugees are involved.

Research interest in conflicts among migrants emerged in Germany in the 1990s. The reasons for this were the wars in former Yugoslavia and the escalation of the conflict between the Kurdish Workers' Party PKK and the Turkish state. Both conflicts triggered violent protests and confrontations between supporters of different conflict parties in several German cities (Hanrath, 2012, p. 24). The subsequent studies concluded that the core conflicts had an ethnicising effect on the people living in Germany with a migration background from the respective countries. Ethnicising means that in the course of the conflict, people from these countries identified more strongly with an ethnic group than was previously the case. This connection was particularly strong among second-generation migrants, even among those who did not initially attach great importance to their ethnic identity (Brieden & Ronge, 1995, pp. 285-286; Brieden, 1996b). However, many participants in the research also explained at the time that in their everyday lives they saw a direct connection between the development of the core conflicts and increasing discrimination in Germany. This supposed reduction of their own identity to the role of a troublemaker was stated by many study participants as the main reason why they found it difficult to identify with Germany and became aware of their ethnic identity (Brieden, 1996a, p. 44). Several studies that were carried out at the same time at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence in Bielefeld, Germany, showed similar results. These studies also

noted re-ethnicisation processes and an increasing attraction of nationalist and Islamist ideologies especially among young people with a Turkey-related migration background born in Germany.

Although the authors identified a lack of recognition and socio-economic inclusion of migrants in German society as the decisive factors for this development, they also pointed to the persistence of traditional, patriarchal patterns of parenting and role models within the Turkey-related communities, which also played a role in this development (Heitmeyer, 1996; Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 1997; Heitmeyer, Müller & Schröder, 1998).

Some of the cited authors put forward the thesis that it was the developments in the countries of origin in particular that were triggering this re-ethnicisation, and that recourse to ethnic group identity filled an "identity vacuum" created by migration. They stated that this "conflict importation" had complicated the integration into the German majority society of the migrants concerned (Heitmeyer, 1996; Skubsch, 2000, pp. 49-51). They concluded that the German state must support the assimilation of the affected migrant groups into society through educational offers and pedagogy. According to the study, in the process the state should work towards the adoption of the language, values and way of life of the majority society while the segregation of migrants, who were only integrated into their own community, should be broken up (Esser, 1996, 2001, pp. 17-20).

The studies cited are exemplary for the thesis of conflict import, as they assume that migrants who live ethnically isolated from the majority society reproduce conflicts from their home countries in the settlement context. However, they did not consider the consequences of discrimination and denied participation migrants experience in Germany. There was therefore extensive criticism of this view, which noted in particular that the authors had largely ignored the influence of the settlement society on the development of migrant identities and the emergence of conflicts. They had also either ignored the transnational relationships of migrants or regarded them as an obstacle to integration (see Christ, 2019,

pp. 15-17). The thesis of conflict importation, which only considers influencing factors from the context of origin of migrants, has therefore been refuted from a scientific point of view. However, it remains a powerful view in German politics and with the public, as is shown by the media reports cited at the beginning of this *Paper*.

From “conflict importation” to “conflict transportation”: The interrelationship between core conflicts and the conditions of the receiving society

With the shift towards transnationalism (Etzold, 2017, p. 45) in migration research, several studies have rejected the thesis of “conflict importation” (see, for example, Baser, 2015, p. 106). Since then, researchers speak of “conflict transportation” (Feron, 2017). This term evolved from a critical reading of the “methodological nationalism” of contemporary migration research, which found that the social relationships and personal experiences of migrants not only have the place of settlement as a reference but are situated in a transnational context (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002).

Instead, proponents of the hypothesis of conflict transportation focus on the cross-border social relations of migrants and their simultaneous positioning in different contexts (Faist, 1998; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). They also take into account individual experiences in the migration process, which play an important role in the development of migrant identities and social relationships (Mahler, 1998, pp. 66-73; Glick Schiller, Caglar & Guldbrandsen, 2006). This approach acknowledges that core conflicts transferred through transnational relationships affect the social relations of migrants in the context of the receiving country. At the same time, however, it assumes that the conditions of the host society and the consequences of the migration process determine the way such conflicts are dealt with (Baser, 2015, pp. 7-8; Faist, 1998; Feron, 2016). Disorientation and uncertainty as a result of changes in the social and cultural context as well as the loss of status in the course of migration

often trigger a reorientation of both individual and collective self-perceptions of migrants (Riemann, 2003). In this context, Feron (2016) speaks of “identity insecurity” (p. 365). This reorientation can refer to one’s own biography and origin or to that of the family, and can reactivate ethnic, national or even religious affiliations that refer to the context of origin. In this context, it is conceivable that a return to conflict lines from the context of origin may occur. The more precarious life in the reception context, the more likely an import of these conflict lines, as social and economic inequality, discrimination and racism reinforce this process. Studies show that this mainly affects second- and third-generation migrants who have already grown up in the settlement context (Hanrath, 2012, p. 25; Yildirim, 2018, pp. 240-243). The original reasons for migration also influence the positioning of migrant communities with regard to the core conflict. Thus, collectively experienced or remembered forced displacement, violence and trauma often form a central reference point for the self-perception of migrant communities that were forced to leave their context of origin. These memories are passed on through family narratives and thus become part of the collective memory (Koinova, 2016, p. 322). Narratives and memories referring to “places of long-ing” (Bromber, 2013, p. 65) in the context of origin are also taken up and (re-)interpreted in the respective settlement context (Freitag & Oppen, 2005, pp. 2-3). Organised diaspora communities⁶ and migrant

6 \ This study follows the definition of Safran (1991) who defines diaspora as “expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original “center” to two or more “peripheral”, or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland— its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not— and perhaps cannot be— fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return— when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Safran 1991, pp. 83-84) Here, it is the collective memory of and the continuing relationship to the country of origin that are decisive

self-organisations play an important role in these processes. While most organisations primarily focus on maintaining tradition and integrating into the settlement society, some explicitly pursue political goals. Some of them are in close contact with actors from the context of origin who try to influence diaspora communities specifically for their own means (Feron & Lefort, 2018, pp. 43-44). These organisations usually paint a romanticised image of the “old homeland” and promote nationalism related to the country of origin (Baser, 2015, p. 17; Feron, 2012). In the process, the lines of a core conflict can be utilised to ensure cohesion and identity of their own group in a foreign country and possibly promote the reproduction of core conflicts in exile (Faist, 1998, pp. 235-242; Feron, 2012).

Diaspora communities that developed from conflict-induced migration thus differ from those whose members migrated primarily for economic reasons; however nationalism related to the country of origin can also re-emerge in the case of the latter. Due to their degree of organisation, their resources and their visibility in the public, such organisations often shape the way entire migrant communities from a certain context of origin are perceived by the host society. In addition, they often claim a representative role for these communities. This position is sometimes even officially conceded to them by the policy of the settlement country, as they grant them a sort of monopoly status as contact partners for integration policy. However, this does not do justice to the actual diversity of migration-related experiences and discourses. On the contrary, there are usually intense disputes between various organisations and associations about the question of who may legitimately represent the community. These disputes are often barely perceived by the majority society. Generalisations based on the activities of individual organisations or individuals must therefore be avoided (Adamson, 2005; Koinova, 2017, p 7; Feron & Lefort, 2018). The following discussions take this into account.

Besides concrete and tangible, current “conflict events” in the context of origin, discrimination in the settlement context, collectively experienced or remembered suffering, and the activities of diaspora

organisations thus also lead to the reproduction of political, ethnic or religious affiliations and lines of conflict in the diaspora, although there are often no longer any personal or geographical points of contact with them (Feron, 2016, pp. 368-370; Hanrath, 2011, p 6). In the course of particularly conflict-laden events in the context of origin of those involved, these conflicts might erupt in the settlement context. Nevertheless, these are not a mere continuation of conflicts from the context of origin. Instead, they are also an expression of experiences of conflict in the settlement society such as discrimination, ethnic segregation, or lack of participation. However, these experiences are articulated in the categories and the language of the core conflict and are in part influenced by actors from the homeland context. Such conflicts can thus be seen as a process of identity formation in the context of a migration society. Often, the categories, the language and the lines of a core conflict are used in this context. This is what Feron (2016), for instance, calls conflict transportation.

German-language migration research has so far dealt only marginally with this topic. In the few exceptions, the Turkish-Kurdish conflict is usually the focus of attention, while other conflicts remain underexposed (Baser, 2015; Hanrath, 2011, p. 9). German-speaking and international researchers so far have not investigated conflicts among refugees and their interactions with migrant communities with roots in the same countries of origin (Krause, 2018, pp. 13, 26). Scientific studies concerning the involvement of migrant self-organisations in refugee work (Karakayali, 2018, pp. 19-21) are just as few and far between. The findings of this Study cast doubt on whether the thesis of conflict transportation is transferable to the group of refugees. Primarily, refugees differ from migrants and their descendants through what is (for the time being) a short stay in the receiving country. Furthermore, in contrast to migrant communities who have migrated primarily out of economic constraints, they have had drastic, sometimes violent experiences in the core conflicts and while fleeing. Researchers should take this into account accordingly. This *Study* presents some ideas on how to close these research gaps.

The methodology of the study

This *Working Paper* and its underlying research are part of the project “Between civil war and integration—Refugees and the challenges and opportunities of societal change in NRW”, which BICC has been carrying out since April 2016 and is funded by the Ministry of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia. Since September 2018, the author has interviewed 32 refugees from Turkey as part of three group interviews and numerous individual interviews. He interviewed several of them more than once, taking the opportunity to also discuss the changes that had occurred during this period. The author also spoke with representatives of several migrant self-organisations, advisory centres and research institutions, as well as social workers.

The interviews with refugees focused on three areas: (1) their experiences after their arrival in Germany and the impact of the experience of displacement on their self-perception; (2) experiences with other refugees, migrant communities and migrant self-organisations in the place of settlement and the perceived influence of political developments in Turkey on these processes; (3) the attitudes of the interviewees towards members of the respective other groups. These conversations were based on the model of the narrative interview, in which the interviewer’s input is limited to a few open questions (Riemann, 2003; Rosenthal, 2016). The content of the conversation rested upon the interviewees. For the interviews with representatives of migrant self-organisations and advisory centres, the author had developed question guides in advance (Bernard, 2006, pp. 210-251; Kruse, 2015, pp. 166-167). Here, the thematic focus was on the activities of the organisation in question in its work with Turkish refugees and on the effects of the conflicts in Turkey on the respective organisation or the respective interview partners.

A challenge for the research was the situation of the refugees, who often have an uncertain legal status and have partly been through traumatic experiences before and while they fled their homes. To

prepare for such situations, the researchers of the abovementioned project first took part in trauma-awareness training to avoid unintentionally stressful interview situations for the interviewees. Accordingly, the interviews did not address any potentially traumatic experiences. Many of the interviewees nevertheless used the conversations to talk about stories of and reasons for their displacement (Rosenthal, 2016, pp. 924-927).

Furthermore, the author tried to control the effects of power asymmetry with regard to the interviewees as much as possible by constantly assuring confidentiality and transparency, leaving it to the interviewees to choose the time and place of the conversations and to co-determine the content (Miko-Schefzig & Reiter, 2018; Rosenthal, 2016, p. 928). Furthermore, they were free to stop the conversation at any time, but this did not happen.⁷

A limitation for this study results from the fact that it has not yet been possible to have longer conversations with female refugees, as it was mostly men who reacted to being contacted, and they did not bring their wives along to the conversations. This seems all the more relevant, as several interview partners pointed out that their wives and children were suffering more from the experiences of having fled their homes and the sudden change of their place of residence than they were themselves. Thus, the statements presented here largely reflect the positions of male refugees.

⁷ \ A Turkish social scientist, who himself had to flee Turkey in the aftermath of the coup attempt, also helped to establish contacts and select confidential interview locations in public areas. He was also present at many conversations, asking questions and interpreting. This way, trust was quickly built up, and the language barrier was reduced. For this, I am very grateful to him. This approach is based on the idea of cooperative research, which actively involves the research participants in shaping the research project (Fontanari, Karpenstein, Schwarz & Sulimma, 2014).

Conflict analysis

An inductive approach to data analysis, based on the Grounded Theory method, was chosen for this study. Accordingly, this analysis is divided into four sub-chapters based on the categories encountered during data analysis: (1) the experiences of Turkish refugees before and after having fled and the effects of these experiences on their self-perception; (2) the interactions between refugees and people with a Turkey-related migration background in the place of settlement and the conflicts experienced; (3) the mutual perception of the individual groups, as well as (4) the experiences of Turkey-related migrant self-organisations and the developments within Turkey-related migrant communities against the background of the conflicts in Turkey. Sub-chapters (1) and (3) analyse statements on the socio-economic causes of conflicts, while (2) and (4) describe the phenomenology of the conflicts. The analysis approaches influences from the context of origin and settlement reciprocally and not in individual separate sub-chapters, as the participants in the conversations did not make this distinction in their answers either. The Turkish refugees are very aware of events occurring in Turkey, and this has a strong influence on their behaviour in the settlement context, which is why the interview partners addressed them again and again. This underlines the transnational positioning of those interviewed and the transnational character of the conflicts identified in this research.

“I have disappeared”: Fleeing from Turkey and the settlement process in Germany

At first, the conversations with refugees focused on the consequences of political repression in Turkey and the experiences while they were fleeing. Their reports illustrate the profound impact that political repression has on the biographies of those who are subjected to it. Most interview partners held prestigious social and professional positions in Turkey. Among them are public prosecutors, police officers and university lecturers who were accustomed to

corresponding social interaction. Most were dismissed from their old employment on the basis of, according to their own accounts, false suspicions of being supporters of terrorism, or Gulen supporters⁸ and coup-plotters. They also feel strongly that their dismissal, often from national service, and the subsequent persecution is a devaluation of their life achievements (GI1, GI2, GI3).⁹

After losing their jobs and subsequently being persecuted by the state, some of them hid in anonymously rented apartments or hotel rooms, sometimes for several weeks. They tried to avoid their neighbours so as not to attract attention. Some reported that they only dared to venture out onto the streets in the dark and that they could not go shopping (I4, I7, I8, GI12, GI13). One interviewee described this tactic with the words “I have disappeared” (GI3). Often, however, their children made permanent hiding in Turkey impossible. For instance, neighbours became suspicious of one of the families concerned, because their children did not go to school. The children were bored at home, played loudly and thus drew attention to the apartment. In many cases, like in this one, concern for the safety of the family finally made them take the decision to flee from Turkey. (I1, I8, I9, GI2, GI3).

One interview partner reported that he had been arrested although innocent after the military coup and had been charged with being a terrorist due to the forced statement of a friend. After returning from several months in custody, none of his 16 neighbours in the house approached him to inquire about his sit

8 \ The Gulen Movement is a network for religious and educational policy, which, according to its own statements, “[maintains] more than 1,500 schools in more than 160 countries, [organises] private tutoring courses, [runs] “dialogue institutes”, publishes newspapers and magazines, [owns] television stations, and [is] connected via globally active business associations. The movement that likes to call [itself] *Hizmet* (service to others) arose in Turkey. [...] In Germany, more than 300 regional educational associations are active, which, according to their own information, run schools, mostly secondary schools [*Gymnasien*], and cultivate “intercultural dialogue” (Seufert, 2014; Dohrn, 2017). Turkey classifies the Gulen movement as a terrorist organisation, but the European Commission does not (European Commission, 2018, p. 8). Some analysts accuse the network of being a parapolitical organisation aimed at fostering power and influence (Watmough & Ozturk, 2018).

9 \ As the interview partners did not want to have the conversations recorded due to security concerns, their statements are usually paraphrased here.

uation. This disturbed him greatly, and he said that because of how he was treated, he was almost convinced himself that he was guilty of a crime. Due to these experiences, he avoids contact with the Turkish community in Germany as he expects no understanding from the people there, and a rational discussion is generally not possible. The prospect of getting back into a situation similar to that in Turkey seems so painful to him that he wants to avoid a new confrontation at all costs. In his opinion, the consequences of such an experience cannot be comprehended by people who have not experienced it themselves (GI2).

After fleeing, the refugees experience a dramatic loss of status due to living in shared accommodation facilities or small apartments, as well as their precarious status as refugees or asylum seekers. The experience of being dependent on transfer payments and the decisions of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is also very painful. This hits them even harder, as almost all of them had a high social status in their homeland and were accustomed to “taking care of their own affairs” (I6). This and the low probability, especially for former civil servants, of being able to work in their old profession again in Germany led to a high degree of resignation. Several interview partners mentioned that they felt they were not needed in Germany. A former public prosecutor said that he felt “like a foreign body that needs to be repelled”¹⁰ (I8). Another interview partner does not want to return to Turkey, as he cannot live there under the current conditions and does not expect any understanding from Turkish society. At the same time, he is certain that in Germany, he “will never get back his customary social status again” (GI2).

The conversations also show that many refugees had devastating experiences at the BAMF and the job centres. They complain that the German authorities do not address their individual circumstances, potential and needs, but instead make their life more difficult with restrictions and long waiting times, and by

withholding information concerning the asylum procedure (GI1, GI2, I1, I9). Due to these experiences, some try to reduce contact with the authorities to a minimum and do not take advantage of advisory services either (I8, I9). This shows that the immobility, which is experienced by many of those affected as being imposed by the circumstances, has a considerable effect on their self-perception and the possibility of establishing social contacts in the place of settlement. These experiences trigger resignation and social isolation and convey to the refugees the feeling that they are not needed in Germany. As a result, the old identity, which was strongly influenced by their profession and the associated social status, loses importance for the interview partners. For example, one interviewee said that he now neither felt like a Turk nor a German, but that he wanted to be a global citizen instead. He also said that he had to explain to his family that “nothing will ever be the same again” (I1). These statements are significant against the background of the thesis of conflict transportation, according to which violence and traumatisation suffered during forced migration, in combination with uncertainties in the reorientation of one’s own identity, foster the emergence of conflicts.

However, Turkey still remains an important reference point for the refugees. All interview partners keep in touch with relatives and friends via telephone calls, Facebook and various messenger services, and thus also take part in the political and social development of the country. In the process, they also obtain information about their relatives’ personal circumstances. Several interviewees spoke, for example, of acquaintances or relatives who are still in prison for political reasons (I1, I7, I8). Some had even lost acquaintances through suicide as a result of the waves of dismissals and arrests following the attempted coup, or reported that friends had been tortured in prison (I8, GI2, GI3). As politically active people, they also take great interest in these developments and are emotionally involved despite living in Germany.

¹⁰ \ The cited passages are literal quotations of the interview partners, which were translated into English.

One interviewee put it this way: He could not disassociate himself from the events in Turkey any more than he could be separated from a limb (I8). Another said that the events in Turkey naturally continued to affect them, the refugees from Turkey, even in Germany: “How could they not?” (GI2). However, some interviewees severely restrict contact with their relatives who have remained in their home country for fear of negative consequences for them. They find this very painful, as it further intensifies their social isolation in Germany (I7, GI2). But because of their isolation and lack of language skills, it is difficult for many refugees to make contact with the majority society: One interviewee felt that he was “not in Germany at the moment” (GI2) due to the remote location of his accommodation facility and the high proportion of migrants among the employees. Like most of the interview partners, he would like to have more in-depth contact “with Germans” (GI2). A major obstacle to integration is the fact that due to a feeling of mistrust, those affected often initially reject counselling or support from migrant self-organisations, but are often unaware of other services—or are unable to reach them. The reasons for this are illustrated in the following section.

These statements partly confirm the assumption of the conflict transportation hypothesis that the circumstances of forced displacement and the experiences in the reception context, together with transnational information exchange, strongly influence migrants’ identity development. However, they contradict the thesis with regard to one important point: The interviewees in the context of this study did not experience the re-ethnicisation process assumed by the theory. On the contrary, the old Turkish ethnic or civic identity lost importance for them. Accordingly, they did not mention any conflicts related to political developments in Turkey with other Turkish refugees. These conflicts did not become apparent during the group interviews either. Due to their shared experiences, there was instead a sense of solidarity among the participants. This may also be due to the fact that all refugees come from a similar social and

professional context and have been forced to flee for similar reasons. In the interviews, they reported that they experienced conflicts primarily in the interaction with people with a Turkey-related migration background in the respective place of settlement. In the following, this will be investigated.

“We don’t want your money”: Encounters and conflicts between Turkish refugees and people with a Turkey-related migration background in their place of settlement

In contrast to the experiences of solidarity among Turkish refugees, their relationship with people with a Turkey-related migration background in the German settlement context is characterised by mistrust and sometimes conflict. In this context, referring to the key question of the study, the political discourse in Turkey certainly influences their experiences in Germany. Due to the very tense housing market in the large cities of North Rhine-Westphalia and their limited financial possibilities, Turkish refugees often move into areas that are already characterised by a high proportion of inhabitants with a migration history, including many with a Turkey-related background. Not all interviewees consider this to be beneficial, although the Turkish-language services available in these neighbourhoods make it easier to settle there. For example, one interviewee described the suburb of a big city in the Ruhr area in which his family had been accommodated as a “very bad place” due to the high proportion of inhabitants with a migration history and the generally low social status of most inhabitants (GI3). Another is also unhappy about his strongly Turkish-influenced living environment in the periphery of a big city in the Rhine region, as the risk of encountering “other Turks” seems to him to be very high there (I1). In these assessments, the possibility of meeting supporters of the Turkish government in the neighbourhood and thus evoking conflicts plays an important role. However, due to the

proximity, encounters between the two groups occur automatically in everyday life, for example when shopping, at school or in kindergarten.

In the schools, classmates and parents with a Turkey-related migration background soon notice that the children of the refugees do not speak German. According to some interviewees, the pronunciation of the Turkish language also distinguishes those who have recently arrived from the people living here with a Turkey-related migration background (I1, I13). One interview partner who still goes to school said that classmates with a Turkey-related migration background rejected him due to his poor German language skills (I2). His classmates also noticed the lack of language skills of his parents, which led them and their parents to conclude that the family must have come to Germany only recently. Other interview partners reported similar experiences (I1, I9).

Several interview partners said that in this context, people with a Turkey-related migration background often asked them about their residence status and the reason for their being in Germany (I9, I11, GI2). Some were also approached in the context of religious festivities or charitable events on the street or in the apartment building (I1, I4, GI2). Some people asking these questions probably hoped to get information about possibilities for relatives to enter the country from Turkey (I1, I4). The refugees, however, interpreted these questions as a subtle form of interrogation. In such situations, they usually avoid telling the truth about why they are in Germany, or they lie for fear of arousing hostilities: One of them claimed to be a guest researcher on an exchange programme in Germany (I9). Another said he was an Erasmus student from Turkey (GI3). Most refugees try to avoid such encounters in general. Some only speak English in public so as not to be recognised. Others avoid staying in places with a strong presence of Turkey-related people or organisations (I1, I4, I9, GI2). However, none of the interviewees had any illusions about being able to conceal the truth for a long time, as they are often asked about their residence status and their history (I4, I4). This was also confirmed by employees of information centres, according to whom it was

common practice within the Turkey-related communities to ask for the origin, personal background or political attitude of the conversation partners, the consequence being a constant compulsion to position oneself in everyday life (I10, I11, I12). For these reasons, the refugees have the impression that they are under observation and possibly under threat.

The accompanying fear in this process is not unfounded. For example, one interview partner reported an incident at a Turkish market in his current place of residence in NRW: An older trader, who had noticed that he and his family did not understand German, asked him about his personal background. When he told the truth, the trader accused him of being a Gulen supporter, replying: “We don’t need your money!” making him and his family leave the market. (GI2). Several interview partners reported that being treated with hostility as “traitors to their fatherland” or “terrorist supporters” by individuals with a Turkey-related migration background is rather common in everyday life, with the result that they avoid contact as much as possible (I5, I9, GI2). However, this also means that they are prevented from connecting with Turkey-related communities and associations. This applies especially to those refugees who do not sympathise with the Gulen movement and therefore do not want to turn to its networks in NRW. The combination of the general difficulties for refugees to connect to German society and the sometimes isolated location of their places of residence, puts them in a precarious social situation.

Furthermore, the experiences of Turkish refugees during the hearings at the BAMF influence their attitudes towards people with a Turkey-related migrant background. Some interview partners reported problems with the interpreters during the hearings. They claimed that their translation was deliberately wrong and speculated that the interpreters in question were supporters of the Turkish government who did not want Turkish opposition members to find refuge in Germany (I1, I7, I8, I9). Reports about “Turkish spies at the BAMF” (Karakoyun, 2018, p. 24), as can be found, for example, in a leaflet of the Gulen movement, create a high degree of uncertainty among the refugees.

They are afraid they will not get protection in Germany due to deliberate false translations by the interpreters and, in the worst case, be sent back to Turkey. Similar statements from applicants from other countries are also circulating and seem to point to a problem at the BAMF, at least between 2015 and 2017 (see also Christ, Meininghaus & Röing, 2019, p. 23). Although these reports cannot be substantiated with certainty, they do explain the great distrust with which the refugees behave towards other people with a Turkey-related migration background in Germany. Refugees initially often do not differentiate between supporters and critics of the Turkish government and instead assume that most people with a Turkey-related migration background in Germany are supporters of the Turkish government. A differentiated perspective, which recognises the diverse and opposing positions among people with a Turkey-related migration background in Germany, is only adopted by some of them over time.

Some interviewees also reported that employees of the refugee shelters they lived in after arriving in Germany, as well as the security services staff with a Turkey-related migration background working there, were very reserved towards them. It was added that they did not support the Turkish refugees, while it was a matter of course between employees and refugees with an Arabic-speaking background. In this case, too, they assumed that political reservations were the reason for this behaviour (I8, GI2, GI3, for other explanatory approaches see also Christ, Meininghaus & Röing, 2019, pp. 34-36). One refugee said that in the shared accommodation facility he was staying at with his family, security guards with a Turkey-related migration background took photos of Turkish refugees, which, in his opinion, would be sent to government agencies in Turkey (I1). In this context, representatives of several migrant self-organisations reported of an “espionage hotline” offered by the government-affiliated Turkish newspaper *Sabah* to report “traitors” abroad (I5, I10, I11, Karakoyun, 2018, p. 21). These experiences create a high degree of insecurity, which accompanies the refugees far into their everyday lives, even after their asylum status has been recognised and they have

moved out of the shared accommodation facilities. According to their statements, fear for the safety of relatives and friends in Turkey plays an important role (I4, I7).

The interviews showed that such experiences prevented the interviewees from overcoming the fear of state persecution that they brought with them from Turkey. For example, a couple that was interviewed who had lost their jobs as a result of the failed military coup reported that shortly after their arrival in Germany they were constantly afraid of encountering a police car on the street. They had not yet got used to the fact that in Germany they no longer had to fear persecution by state authorities. At the same time, they also reported problems with interpreters during their hearing at the BAMF. They did not want to trust them unreservedly, as they could not judge which political spectrum they were close to. These interviewees also said that they did not want to be in contact with people with a Turkey-related migration background and that they spoke English in public out of fear of persecution (I4).

Similar statements were made by almost all of the Turkish refugees who were interviewed. Because they fled from political persecution in their homeland, they also show a lot of sensitivity to possible hostilities in the settlement context. However, the perceived threat no longer originates from the Turkish state, but from individuals and organisations of the Turkish diaspora.

They are especially concerned about possibly provoking negative consequences for relatives and friends in their place of origin through encounters with supporters of the Turkish government in Germany (I4, I8, I9). For this reason, they are initially sceptical towards people with a Turkey-related migration background in the place of settlement and try to avoid interaction with them (I1, I4, I9). In this context, several interviewees reported that they had the feeling that experiences they had had in Turkey were being repeated in Germany, and that the conflict from which they had fled would catch up with them again here (GI2). They substantiated these statements in particular by their feeling of being observed and potentially being threatened in everyday life. In

response, some of them adopt security practices, which they had already adopted in Turkey (von Boemcken, Boboyorov & Bagdasarova, 2018). As explained above, this includes, for example, pretending in public not to speak Turkish, or avoiding certain places in daily life.

Although the conflicts described remained on a verbal, non-violent level in all reported cases, they left a strong impression on those affected due to their powerlessness and fear of state persecution. They only contact people with a Turkey-related migration background in Germany if they can be sure that they are not supporters of the Turkish government. Some interviewees avoid even ideologically neutral and politically independent information centres that employ Turkish-speaking staff (I9). Refugees feel that the everyday conflicts mentioned, but also the experiences described with the staff of refugee shelters as well as interpreters, confirm their bias and thus apply these to all people with a Turkey-related migration background. Initially, they usually do not realise that Turkey's political development and the relationship to the Turkish government are viewed very critically and discussed controversially within the Turkey-related communities in NRW, too. Instead, they generally assume that the majority of the German population with a Turkey-related migration background supports the Turkish government. In some case, this goes so far that they do not contact their own family members who have been living in Germany for decades, for fear that they might be supporters of Erdogan (GI3). However, some interviewees changed their minds after some time, after having had good personal experiences with volunteers with a Turkey-related migration background or with migrant self-organisations (I7, I8).

The fact that individuals explicitly refer to the political situation in Turkey or fall back on categories or manners of speaking from this context—such as the insults “traitor”, “Gülenist” or the accusation of supporting terrorism—supports the assumption that conflicts in Turkey cause a high degree of polarisation among Turkey-related communities in NRW.

In accordance with the theory, it can be assumed that some members of these communities transport conflict lines and discourses from the Turkish context of origin to NRW. They also perceive the refugees from Turkey in the categories of these conflicts. In the case of the latter, it reinforces the impression that the conflicts in their homeland from which they have fled are now catching up with them again. To set the causes of these developments in the wider context, the interviewees were asked to give the reasons that, in their opinion, led to the conflicts described in this section.

“They were used to having all their wishes fulfilled”: The mutual perception of Turkish refugees and people with a Turkey-related migration background

This chapter analyses how the interviewees themselves made sense of these conflicts. In their answers, many interviewees revealed their opinions about members of the other groups. These include statements by followers of the Gulen movement about supporters of the Turkish government, as well as the general perception by people with a Turkey-related migration background in Germany of refugees newly arriving from Turkey. These statements reflect the perspectives of the respective interviewees and allow conclusions to be drawn about the motivations behind their actions and their experiences described in the previous chapters. Furthermore, they help to fill the gap arising from the lack of interviews with supporters of the Turkish government (Hüttermann, 2018, pp. 13-14).

In response to the interview question as to whether they could understand why some people with a Turkey-related migration background were so hostile towards them, most of the refugees mentioned the origin of Turkish migrants in Germany (I1, I4, I9). In the interviews, they often emphasised that the generation of guest workers came from conservative, rural regions of Turkey where there was no high standard of education. They explained that in Turkey,

this population group was economically marginalised and excluded from political participation for a long time, too. However, under the AKP government, this group was now in power and was allegedly trying to pay the injustice experienced back to the elites it regarded as responsible (I1, I4, I9). This process was now being repeated in Germany. Migrant workers from Turkey and their descendants had also been excluded and not been accepted for a long time here. Therefore, they had tried to keep their values and traditions alive in the foreign country. They still did not feel as if they belonged to Germany and believe Erdogan's "false promises" (I9).

Despite this alleged consistency between developments in Turkey and in Germany claimed by the interviewees, some of them also recognised differences between people in Turkey and people with a Turkey-related migration background in Germany. Thus several interviewees found the national-chauvinistic and emphatically masculine outward appearance of some men with a Turkey-related migration background perplexing, this being something they did not know in this form from Turkey (I1, I2, I12). Although this seems unlikely, these statements correspond with the theoretical assumption that on the one hand migrant communities preserve values and attitudes from the context of origin, while on the other hand the socialisation in the societal and cultural context of the place of settlement influences how these are acted out. The encounter of the two groups in the example described reflects these different experiences of socialisation. As a result, the refugees feel vindicated in their generalising perception of people with a Turkey-related migration background by their observations, while interviewees with a Turkey-related migration background reject these statements and emphasise the independent development of migrant communities in Germany (I5, I6, I11, I13). However, all interviewees, including those without experiences of forced migration, generally endorsed the interpretation of the Turkish refugee cited above. They said that the political exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage experienced by the 'guest worker generation' in

Germany, combined with the conservative religious origins of many families, explained the conflicts within the communities. This created fertile ground for nationalist and fundamentalist messages from the country of origin (I3, I5, I6, I11, I13). According to the interviewees, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Diyanet Isleri Turk Islam Birliği, DITIB) and the Turkish media—which is popular among some people with a Turkey-related migration background and to a large extent now has close ties to the Turkish government—are prime examples of this influence (I11, I12, I13).

These tensions became particularly apparent during the state visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Germany in September 2018. A refugee said that he wanted to avoid the city centre on that day (I1). One interviewee with a Turkey-related migration background said that in the weeks leading up to the state visit, he had observed a lot of activity of Turkish government supporters on social media, where they called for travelling there together from Germany and its neighbouring countries. He was very concerned about this, as he feared that there would be riots. He believed that such activities would drive a wedge into the Turkish community in Germany as well as between people with a Turkey-related migration background and the rest of German society. He wished for clear statements from German policymakers directed towards the Turkish government and its influence in Germany (I6). These two interviewees are sceptical about the activities of the state-run Turkish religious authority, Diyanet, and of DITIB and justify this with their concern about possible interference from Turkey. They accuse these actors of using their stance and their actions to foster polarisation within Turkey-related migrant communities and to isolate some of their members (I1, I5, I6, I10, I13).

However, some interviewees were of the opinion that the lines of conflict described had always been part of Turkish society and that they could be explained by the country's history. Turkish politics has always been organised along group affiliations and group identities. They said that political actors were

specifically mobilising these to promote their own interest. These lines of conflict were also represented within the Turkish diaspora (I1, I11, I12). This is reinforced by the activities of the Turkish state in Germany and especially its attempts to bind young people to Turkey (I11, I12). With these interpretations, the interview partners almost literally support the assumptions of the theory of conflict transportation. At the same time, their critical stance shows that core conflicts lead to very diverse and contentious responses within migrant communities. With these considerations in mind, the reproduction of a conflict in the diaspora is only one possible consequence—in the interviews with representatives of migrant self-organisations, there are also examples of communication projects and critical work with the media.

However, the interviews also contain indications that the social background of the Turkish refugees interviewed plays a role in the mutual perception of the two groups. Most of the refugees belong to middle-class families. Many of them are close to the Gulen movement, others have a more secular view of the world. All of them have a high level of education and mostly come from a metropolitan environment. Several interviewees associated with Turkey-related migrant self-organisations said that this personal background influences the abovementioned opinions of refugees with regard to people with a Turkey-related migration background who live in Germany. For example, one interviewee, who is a member of a migrant self-organisation that supports refugees in their integration in Germany, remarked that some of the Turkish refugees were “on a very high horse” and were used to having “all of their wishes fulfilled” in Turkey. He said that there were huge differences in social behaviour between them and the descendants of the guest worker generation in Germany, and that the social interaction with the refugees was, therefore, difficult (I6). Another interviewee said that it was a new experience for the refugees not to receive special treatment from German bureaucracy. In Turkey, this had long been common practice towards members of the upper class (I12). A representative of a social agency in the area of migration work spoke of a

constant “deficit orientation of the Turkish upper class towards the German Turks”, whom they did not regard as “real Turks”, but as descendants of a less educated social strata (I11). In this context, two interviewees mentioned the contrast between so-called white Turks—members of the old, Kemalist upper class—and black Turks, which refers to the inhabitants of the more conservative, rural regions (I11, I12). The white Turks do not acknowledge the educational advancement and economic success of many members of the second and third generation of people in Germany with a Turkish migration background. One refugee unintentionally confirmed this point of view when he said that jokes about the descendants of guest workers and their pronunciation of the Turkish language were common in Turkey (I1).

Another refugee supported this interpretation by using the social difference between the two groups to explain the distanced stance of refugee shelter employees with a Turkey-related migration background (GI3). In his opinion, the problem is that the Turkish refugees do not conform to the typical image of a “refugee”: “We had a high social status in Turkey and also behave accordingly in the accommodation facilities. We abide by the rules and always remain considerate”. (GI2). In his opinion, they also connect quickly with relatives or existing networks in Germany, which also distinguishes them from the other inhabitants of the accommodation facilities. As an example, he cited the fact that an acquaintance had picked him up for the interview with a car, adding that the staff viewed this with scepticism, as refugees, in their eyes, have a lower status.

Although this does not apply to many Turkish refugees, the cited statements nevertheless reveal something about the self-perception of the person cited, who believes that his high social status sets him apart from the other inhabitants of the shelter as well as from the employees. Yet, they also show how the loss of status as a result of having to flee described in the first part of the analysis section affects his interaction with people with a Turkey-related migration background in Germany: The interviewee assumes that the staff of the shelter in which

he lives have a certain image of refugees in need; not matching this image is of great importance to him. Being a “refugee” is not compatible with his self-image, especially against the background of his former social status. Accordingly, most Turkish refugees refused to be categorised as refugees or asylum seekers. Instead, they constantly emphasised their previous activities and educational background in the interview. In general, many refugees often reject categorisations as being stigmatising, and it is particularly difficult for people with a high level of education to come to terms with the changed situation (Christ, 2019). A representative of a migrant self-organisations calls the Turkish refugees “expatriates”, not refugees (I10). However, rejecting this categorisation seems to be easier for people close to the Gulen movement than for others. Several interviewees confirmed that they quickly connected to the social and professional networks of the movement in NRW and were able to leave the precarious living situation in the accommodation facilities behind them more quickly, and build a new life for themselves. The others tended to “fall by the wayside”. (I13, I14).

These statements also confirm one of the basic assumptions of the conflict transportation hypothesis: Although the lines of conflict within a migrant community at first glance reflect those of the context of origin, they are subject to the structuring influence of the settlement society. In the example described here, there are similar lines of conflict to those in Turkey, such as the one between Gulen supporters and supporters of the government, as well as the social contrast between members of different social strata. However, the case study shows a reversal of the established power relations in Turkey, at least before the coup attempt. People with a Turkey-related migration background living in Germany, whom many refugees tend to regard with disdain, have an advantage over those refugees who have recently arrived and were a privileged part of the upper class in Turkey due to their language skills, their organisational structure and education. While the latter now live in a precarious situation as refugees and asylum

seekers, the supporters of the Turkish government and the Gulen movement have a highly differentiated network of organisations, services and relationships in NRW, which puts them in a comparatively comfortable position. They also have the language skills and the specific knowledge to cope with their everyday life in Germany, which the refugees initially lack. But at the same time, they continue to experience discrimination and disadvantages by the majority society, which, according to some statements, has increased in the course of the conflicts since 2016 (more on this in the following chapter). Thus, it is indeed not merely an “importation” of conflict, but a process of conflict autonomisation in the German context (Feron, 2017). In comparison to the context of origin, the socio-economic status of the conflict parties changed substantially, and the Turkish state no longer acts directly as a conflict party. The phenomenon is, therefore, far more complex than mere conflict reproduction.

A further difference is that the fundamental democratic order in Germany makes the co-existence of all of the groups named possible, even if this does not always happen peacefully. Accordingly, some of the interviewees find opportunities for political and occupational activities in Germany to which they currently have no access in Turkey. For example, some scientists and students interviewed in the context of this study were able to receive scholarships or research positions at research institutions and universities in Germany. Supporters of the Gulen movement who had fled also receive (social) support from the movement in NRW. Some interviewees claimed that this was the main reason why they fled to NRW (I11, I12). The interviews also show that the interaction does not go in one direction only: Turkish refugees, as well as migrant self-organisations from the Turkey-related communities, try to influence events in Turkey from Germany. For example, they support political prisoners, provide legal assistance or create platforms for critical media coverage (I5, I10, I11). This shows how strongly people, some of whom have not lived in Turkey for a long time or have never lived there, are

involved in the development of the country, which illustrates the transnational character of the processes examined.

The statements cited in this chapter show that people with a Turkey-related migration background who are critical of the government and Turkish refugees in Germany believe that the reasons for the existing conflicts are not only to be found in the influence exerted by Turkey, but also in the context of German society. They reject the perception that conflicts are exclusively imported. Although this qualitative study cannot validate the connection between socio-economic exclusion, influence from the context of origin, and the transfer of conflicts from one place to the other, its results do support the conflict transportation hypothesis. While the quoted statements also illustrate the critical spectrum of opinions beyond the pro-government positions represented by actors from Turkey-related migrant communities regarding the events in the context of origin as well as the settlement context, the interviewees believe that the German public takes no note of these opinions. A homogenising perception that labels all people with a Turkey-related migration background in Germany as supporters of the Turkish government, thus making them responsible for conflicts, should, therefore, be rejected. Theoretical concepts also warn of this.

“Traitors” and “putschists”? The difficult position of migrant self-organisations

To understand the effects of developments in Turkey on the communities of people with a Turkey-related migration background in NRW, the author interviewed representatives of migrant self-organisations, information centres and research institutions that deal with the issue on a scientific or practical level. This is also relevant as a test of the conflict transportation hypothesis, according to which the activities of such organisations can reproduce lines of conflict in the settlement society.

Migrant self-organisations that emerged from Turkey-related migrant communities often provide support and advice by volunteers; in some cases, they also offer officially recognised integration and language courses. For example, organisations related to the Gulen movement in NRW are represented by a differentiated network, which includes educational institutions, schools and cultural associations. There are also religiously and politically unaffiliated organisations that have members with a Turkey-related migration background or were founded by them. Both are points of contact for many refugees. Refugees from Turkey, however, usually only contact these organisations after personal recommendation due to their mistrust described above. Often, either relatives, friends or other refugees living in Germany act as intermediaries. Representatives of the organisations contacted for this study accordingly reported a pronounced scepticism of the refugees, which they only overcome when it is clear that the help and support offered is sincere and without ulterior motives, and that they do not have to fear any negative consequences (I5, I6). Some interview partners explicitly advised the refugees not to move exclusively within Turkish-speaking communities. A representative of an organisation close to the Gulen movement said in this context that the worry of many Turkish refugees that they would remain socially isolated in Germany was technically unfounded, as the proportion of migrants in their neighbourhoods was very high and there were many opportunities to connect with a community. But he advised them to venture out of the Turkish community and connect with the German majority society, for example by becoming members of sports clubs or joining activities in the neighbourhood. Otherwise, they would “experience the trauma of having to flee again and again” (I5) within the community, as those affected would have to always justify their activities in Turkey and their decision to flee.

Talks with representatives of all the migrant self-organisations visited revealed that the failed military coup in Turkey in the summer of 2016 has had a major impact on both their work and on Turkey-related migrant communities in NRW in general. It is true that the lines of conflict that opened up during this event have existed for quite some time, but they have become even more polarised as a result of the developments in recent years. As a result, political differences between individuals and families have become entrenched. This is particularly evident in the religious and family life in the community: Many interviewees said that gatherings at weddings, religious festivals, and public events, for example at panel discussions or in the context of local politics, but also when visiting mosques, often lead to open conflicts (I3, I5, I10, I11). There were also open disputes in schools, especially between pupils with Turkish and Kurdish migration backgrounds, but also between children from families who support the government and those who support the Gulen movement. Those involved used symbols and manners of speaking from the Turkish context: One school social worker, for example, said that symbols of the PKK and Turkish nationalists were regularly found painted in the schoolyard. The word “traitor” (Turkish: hain) was often used. Children of Turkish refugees suffered from this, as well (I13). Several interviewees reported that violent clashes between Gulen supporters and supporters of the Turkish government had also occurred outside the schools and that Gulen supporters had been forcibly expelled from DITIB mosques (I6, I10). These conflicts strongly influence the activities of the Gulen movement in Germany. For example, following the military coup, many families withdrew their children from Gulen-affiliated schools and educational institutions in NRW (I5, I6, I10). Even ideologically neutral migrant self-organisations with a focus on educational work were affected by this, as they also soon came under the suspicion of supporting Gulen (I11). The insults that supporters of the Gulen movement hear in NRW are the same as those reported by the refugees: “traitors”, “putschists” or “terrorist supporters” (I10, I11, I12, I13).

However, some of the interview partners critical of the Gulen movement and the Turkish government emphasised that criticism of the Gulen movement was definitely dividing all political camps in Turkey. They said that for a long time, the movement had profited from its proximity to the AKP government and that it was accordingly complicit in the dismantling of democracy in Turkey. Accordingly, these interviewees were critical of the activities of the Gulen-related organisations in Germany, referring to the conservative understanding of Islam, which, in their opinion, the movement was spreading, and to its opaque structures and the unclear motivation of its members. They also criticised the lack of self-reflection of the Gulen supporters on their own role in the conflicts in both Turkey and the diaspora (I11, I12, I13). On the one hand, this shows how fragmented the debates are within the Turkey-related migrant communities. On the other hand, these statements again illustrate the transnational character of the described conflicts. Supporters and critics of the Gulen movement alike see the conflict from the perspective of the conditions in Turkey and the German context and refer to this transnational context in their statements about the respective other groups.

The military coup of 2016 was cited almost unanimously by all interviewees as the event that exacerbated these polarisations and, in part, turned them into open conflicts. These interviewees said that the attitudes of the individual groups had hardened so much that it was nigh on impossible to break them up. The biggest challenge would be to establish a dialogue between the individual camps in the first place, as the encounters in public spaces usually escalated quickly (I5, I10, I11). A meeting of the individual groups would only be possible, if at all, on issues that affected all members of the group equally, such as discrimination and racism or socio-economic exclusion in the context of society as a whole (I11). This, too, indicates that these conflicts take place in the context of a migration society in which socio-economic exclusion influences the co-existence of migrant communities.

Some interviewees were frustrated by the fact that the German majority society often reduced the identities of people with a Turkey-related migration background to the activities of government-loyal individuals and organisations in Germany, while it did not acknowledge the contentious disputes taking place between people with a Turkish background. As a result, they felt compelled to position and justify themselves publicly with regard to the developments in Turkey and within the Turkey-related migrant communities (I6, I11). For example, one female interviewee who is actively involved in an organisation that supports refugees and in an educational association noted that she was annoyed by the fact that she was constantly being asked where she came from and what her political views were; but she was now just as annoyed if she was not asked about it. The polarising debates of recent times had caused her to reassess her own affiliation, with an outcome that was yet not clear (I6).

The representation of their convictions in society is therefore important for most of the interviewed refugees and people with a Turkey-related migration background. This applies to representation within the migrant communities as well as with regard to the German state and society as a whole. The representatives of migrant self-organisations who were interviewed complained that the Turkish state was trying to become the mouthpiece of the Turkey-related communities and to assert an exclusive right of representation towards German politics. This would not represent the actual diversity of migrant realities and opinions in Germany and would confirm prejudices against the communities.

At the same time, intense pressure to conform was being built up (I5, I6, I10, I11). This statement reflects the assumption of the conflict transportation hypothesis that the experience of exclusion from the settlement society can lead to a re-evaluation of one's own identity—however, as the examples mentioned show, not necessarily through a homogenising return to a supposed “original identity”, but with open outcomes. Accordingly, the interview partners lamented

that society as a whole had an egalitarian view of migrant and diaspora communities and did not appreciate the actual diversity and heterogeneity, nor the contentious discussions within communities of Turkey-related people, reducing them to the conflicts in their country of origin instead (I5, I6, I10, I11).

In this context, one interview partner called on society as a whole “not to give up on” the government-supporting portion of the Turkey-related communities in Germany and “not to leave them to their own devices” (I5); “Generations are lost [as a result]”, people were becoming susceptible to nationalist slogans and were turning away from German society (I6). For this reason, he advised the members of his organisation and the refugees supported by it to position themselves towards society as a whole regarding developments in Turkey and to make themselves visible. He feared that otherwise, a homogenising, anti-Turkish public perception would gain the upper hand, which would ultimately affect all people with a Turkey-related migration background (I6). Similar statements were made by several interview partners (I5, I10, I11, I12).

Conclusion

This study shows how Turkish refugees and people with a Turkey-related migration background interact with each other in everyday life in NRW and how they perceive each other. In this process, disputes have occurred between the two groups that refer to discourses and discursive frameworks from the Turkish political context. The insults “traitor”, “terrorist” or “Gülenist” are indicative of this, as they refer to the political circumstances in Turkey and reflect the style of the pro-government Turkish media. This shows that the political developments in Turkey have also caused a strong polarisation within the Turkey-related migrant communities in Germany, which in turn has an impact on the refugees.

According to the statements of the participants in the study, there were no violent incidents between refugees and people with a Turkey-related migration background. The evasive behaviour and the utmost caution of the refugees probably played a role in avoiding violence, too. However, violence occurred within the Turkey-related migrant communities in the immediate aftermath of the coup attempt, especially between supporters of the Turkish government and the Gülen movement. People with a Kurdish background also seem to have been more frequently involved in acts of violence, but this was not the focus of the study and needs to be analysed in a separate study. The effect of the clashes mentioned in this study is above all an increased mistrust and a high level of caution in the everyday lives of the participants of the study. These latent conflicts are a heavy emotional burden for those affected and strongly influence their behaviour. Even though violent clashes are rare, the risk of escalation cannot be ruled out.

The refugees experience these conflicts as a continuation of the persecution suffered in Turkey and the loss of status during their flight. They, therefore, resort to tactics to protect themselves that they already had to acquire in Turkey. This often reinforces their already existing bias against Germans with a Turkey-related migration background. However, the latter

interpret these conflicts more as a result of the polarising developments within the Turkey-related migrant communities, which in their view are also a result of socio-economic exclusion in the context of the majority society and the influence of the Turkish government.

At the same time, both groups perceive clear differences between each other concerning socialisation and behaviour. Ultimately, their encounters in the urban micro-context in NRW are determined by the socio-economic conditions found in the respective social and geographical context and the political attitudes which have developed there. This analysis confirms the assumptions of the conflict transportation hypothesis, which, besides the exertion of influence from the context of origin, considers the exclusion experienced in the place of settlement to be a reason for the openness of some parts of migrant communities towards nationalist attitudes and for the emergence of conflicts. This shows that the conflict transportation assumed by the theory exists in parts of the Turkey-related migrant communities in NRW. At least the interview partners mentioned all factors identified by the theory that favour such a transportation: A strong group identity and segregation in parts of the communities, socio-economic exclusion and discrimination by the majority society, the influence of nationalist actors and the polarising effect of conflict events in Turkey.

These findings are also manifestations of the transnational living environments of the interview partners and show their transnational frame of reference. They process influences from both the German settlement society and the Turkish society of origin. The result is a complex conflict relationship that relates, on the one hand, to the consequences of a forced migration process and the repression in Turkey, and, on the other, also relates to reputation and status within German society, in the Turkey-related migrant communities, as well as discrimination suffered in each case.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the results of the research presented here are not representative of the entirety of people and organisations with a Turkey-related migration background in NRW. However, they shed light on the diverse and controversial discourses within these communities and on the critical attitudes of many of their members and organisations towards the political situation in Turkey as well as developments within the Turkey-related migrant communities and towards society as a whole. This clearly contradicts the majority society's homogenising perception of people with a Turkey-related migration background—an attitude that many interview partners complained about. A differentiated view that takes the statements and views of those affected seriously is imperative.

This study also reveals some gaps in research to which theory has not yet found an answer. In the existing research on the subject, refugees are practically non-existent, and it refers almost exclusively to diaspora and migrant communities that have long lived outside their context of origin. The results of the study justify doubts as to whether the experience of one group can be transferred to the other. Re-ethnicisation, which is assumed for situations of violent migration and socio-economic marginalisation, is a precondition for a conflict transportation in the sense of the theoretical assumption. This, however, is lacking in the case of the refugees. While this might be a specific feature of this well-educated and economically comparatively privileged group of refugees, it nevertheless means that experiences of forced displacement do not necessarily lead to a resurgence of potentially conflict-laden, essentialist identities. Instead, refugees need emotional and social support to overcome their insecurity and successfully manage a new start in the settlement context. When it comes to avoiding developments such as those described in the study, the experiences of refugees and Turkey-related migrant communities, therefore, provide important insights for dealing

with people who have only recently fled to Germany. Future studies on conflict transportation should, therefore, take a closer look at the everyday experiences of refugees instead of focusing on particularly conflict-laden events, such as religious festivals or political events of diaspora groups. A comprehensive empirical study of conflicts within migrant communities is required, in which conversations with representatives of organisations and individuals of all political orientations must be conducted. Further insights can be provided by approaches such as figurative analysis, which looks at everyday interactions in urban spaces and understands them to be indicators of social processes (Hüttermann, 2018), or the security-scapes perspective, which consciously analyses everyday experiences of uncertainty and the reactions of those affected (von Boemcken, Boboyorov & Bagdasarova, 2018).

From this study, two conclusions can be drawn: First, in this case, the experiences of refugees and people with a migration history in Germany can hardly be separated, even if they differ significantly. Members of both groups meet in everyday life, whereby the political developments in the context of origin are very present in the form of certain discourses and manners of speaking. At the same time, migrant self-organisations do important local integration work for refugees and offer them points of contact. They also attempt to mediate between the state, society as a whole, migrant communities, and refugees, while concurrently having to moderate complex identity-building processes among their members.

This leads to the second conclusion: Such conflicts are not a purely imported phenomenon. Instead, these conflicts are part of a migration society that is constantly changing. People with a migration history grapple with influences from different geographical contexts. Due to their often intense personal and emotional involvement in the development of their country of origin, conflict events there also influence their everyday lives in Germany. Therefore, demanding

that those affected disassociate themselves from the context of origin entirely does not do justice to their transnational realities, assumes they do not feel that they belong to Germany, and does not take their self-perception seriously.

But this raises the question of how to handle such conflicts in practice. First of all, it is important to understand their complexity, which is what this study wants to encourage. To do justice to this complexity, successful conflict management must be based on a differentiated, empirically founded analysis. Migrant communities and migrant self-organisations are not homogeneous blocs and should by no means be reduced to conflicts. Besides organisations that are influenced by actors from the context of origin, there are also those that are critical of both the society of origin and the settlement society. However, the views of these organisations and their members often receive little attention in public discourse, and many of them are struggling with structural issues such as insecure funding or high workloads. They, in particular, also suffer from conflicts and the consequences of polarised discourse. Political measures to prevent conflicts should, therefore, first appreciate and support the work of these organisations, as they are the source of important initiatives for mutual understanding. Better financial and structural support would, therefore, be a good first step

The research literature on the subject shows that migrant self-organisations can use the political opportunities available in the settlement context to build up civic structures and democratic institutions, thus integrating migrant communities into the political processes of society as a whole. If, in this way, they transform conflicts into democratic discussions, this is to be welcomed.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS CITED

GI1:

Group interview with ten Turkish refugees,
21 December 2018

GI2:

Group interview with ten Turkish refugees and
representatives of a migrant self-organisation with
a Turkish background, 02 February 2019

GI3:

Group interview with 12 Turkish refugees,
15 April 2019

I1:

Entries in the field journal, several conversations
with Turkish refugees since mid-2017

I2:

Entries in the field journal, several conversations
since the end of 2017 with a Turkish student who
had to flee

I3:

Entry in the field journal, presentation by a social
worker of Turkish origin, 16 May 2018

I4:

Interview with a Turkish married couple who had
fled, 20 September 2018

I5:

Interview with a representative of a migrant self-
organisation of Turkish origin, 28 September 2018

I6:

Interview with two representatives of a migrant self-
organisation of Turkish origin, 12 October 2018

I7:

Interview with a Turkish refugee, 18 October 2018

I8:

Interview with a Turkish refugee, 22 October 2018

I9:

Entries in the field journal, several conversations
with Turkish refugees since 27 October 2018

I10:

Interview with two representatives of a migrant self-
organisation of Turkish origin, 26 March 2019

I11:

Interview with a social worker of Turkish origin,
03 April 2019

I12:

Interview with a social scientist of Turkish origin,
06 May 2019

I13:

Interview with a school social worker of Turkish
origin, 09 May 2019

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BAMF</i>	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge	<i>BAMF</i>
<i>BICC</i>	Bonn International Center for Conversion	<i>BICC</i>
<i>DITIB</i>	Diyanet Isleri Türk Islam Birliği, Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs	<i>DITIB</i>
<i>MKFFI</i>	Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration of the State of NRW	<i>MKFFI</i>
<i>MSO</i>	Migrant self-organisation	<i>MSO</i>
<i>NRW</i>	North Rhine-Westphalia	<i>NRW</i>
<i>PKK</i>	Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, Kurdistan Workers' Party	<i>PKK</i>

bicc \
Internationales Konversionszentrum Bonn
Bonn International Center for Conversion GmbH

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